Student-Teacher Email Requests: Comparative Analysis of Politeness Strategies Used by Malaysian and Filipino University Students

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Abstract

This comparative study investigates politeness strategies used in Malaysian and Filipino student-teacher requesting emails. After analyzing a corpus of 40 student-teacher email requests that are written by Malaysian and Filipino university students, it is found that Malaysian university students use more direct (i.e., imperative, interrogative) requesting politeness strategies than their Filipino counterparts while Filipino university students use more indirect (i.e., positive, negative) requesting politeness strategies than their Malaysian counterparts. It is also revealed that Filipino students realize their requests longer with more strategies than Malaysian students as they produced more politeness moves than their Malaysian counterparts. This implies that while Filipino students tend to give more reasons and employ other strategies to justify their requests and appeal to their teachers, Malaysian students tend to directly, but politely using politeness mitigation markers, express the request. This study also shows that the use of negative politeness strategies is prominent among Malaysian and Filipino students; however, students also used positive politeness to establish solidarity with teachers with their offering of explanation and expression of goodwill. Although the findings of this study support the universality of request and politeness strategies, differences between the two groups of students are also proof of the culture-specificity of certain strategies. It is recommended to incorporate cross-cultural pragmatic awareness in language classrooms to encourage students to be more culturally adaptable as they engage in communication with people from different nationalities.

Keywords: student-teacher interactions; requesting emails; comparative analysis; positive politeness; negative politeness

1. Introduction

The continuation of the learning process and the success of the students depends on the student and teacher's ability to communicate effectively. In fact, successful student-teacher interactions are strongly correlated with effective professional communication. In the majority of universities, students can communicate verbally or by email with their instructors during office or working hours. Because informal learning is just as vital as formal learning, universities encourage this continuing connection between the two. In this study, email exchanges between students and teachers at two universities in South East Asia—one in Malaysia and the other in the Philippines-are examined.

Malaysia and the Philippines are both South East Asian countries and are members of ASEAN. The English language is taught in public and private schools starting from grade 1 in schools. By the end of high school, students are expected to reach the intermediate level of the language. In universities, the English language is used as the language of instruction but with some code-switching and code-mixing with the national languages of the two countries. Universities, in both countries, provide university email accounts to all registered students and encourage them to use the email in communications with the instructors and other departments. Instructors are also given university email and they are also encouraged to use this email in their communications with students. As such, the use of email is an encouraged channel of communication in the universities of both countries and the use of the English language in drafting these emails is a common practice.

In this age of information and digitization, email communication has supplanted the use of conventional routes of communication. Despite the fact that some academics have classified email as a hybrid form of communication (AlAfnan, 2014), communicators often uphold a professional relationship by using appropriate subject lines, beginnings, closings, and sentences (AlAfnan, 2017). The asynchronous nature of email communication, particularly in thread or chain emails, has narrowed the social distance between communicators and reduced degrees of power relations, especially between superiors and subordinates (AlAfnan, 2015a). Email communication has been classified as an umbrella genre that includes several subgenres, including conversation, requesting, couriering, and informing (AlAfnan, 2015b). In this study, the focus will be on the requesting sub-genre, in general, and politeness strategies used in student-teacher requesting emails, in particular.

In order to classify the many politeness tactics employed by interlocutors, Brown and Levinson (1987) created a politeness theory. They divided the politeness techniques into four categories: off-record politeness, positive politeness, and negative politeness. When the

speaker does not downplay the threat on the hearer's face, they employ the "bald-on-record" technique (Brown and Levinson, 1987). When efficiency is necessary or in an emergency, this tactic can be applied. When the speaker downplays the danger to the hearer's good face, they are using the positive politeness method. Positive manners, then, make the person receiving them feel good about themselves. Hedging, avoiding conflict with the hearer through promises and offers, and avoiding conflicts are all ways to apply this tactic. Negative politeness is the tactic used to minimize the imposition by avoiding any imposition on the hearer. One can employ this tactic by being evasive, pessimistic, and contrite. The off-record approach is utilized when the speaker hides their genuine intentions and relies on the listener's comprehension of the communication's intended meaning. The students' politeness tactics in their emails to their lecturers are categorized using Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness.

In short, this article strives to answer the below research questions.

1. How do Malaysian university students construct their student-teacher email requests?
2. How do Filipino university students construct their student-teacher email requests?
3. How are Malaysian and Filipino student-teacher email requests similar and how are they different?

2. Literature Review

Email, according to Kettinger and Grover (1997), is a computer system used for communicating and exchanging information, including text, numbers, sounds, videos, images, and computer programs. Some of the earlier studies on email, such those by Kerr and Hiltz (1982) and Rice and Borgman (1983), discovered that task-oriented activities including asking and answering questions, providing information, and expressing opinions are the principal uses of email. Task-oriented goals are one of the primary purposes of email in the workplace, albeit they are not the only ones. According to some study, email is used socially as well, such as for keeping in touch.

The efficiency of email and computer-mediated communication (CMC) in the workplace as well as their interactive nature have been disputed by a number of researchers (Brown and Lightfoot, 2002; Davenport and Prusak, 1997). Frazee (1996) noted communication skill deficiencies, disruption of workflow, a drag on productivity, and email overload; Davenport and Prusak (1997), on the other hand, discussed information ineptitude. On the other hand, Nantz and Drexel (1995) discovered that the majority of employees were not given instruction on how to communicate effectively online. However, the information richness theory's criticism of the efficacy, appropriateness, and use of CMC and email in the workplace is the most divisive (Daft and Lengel, 1986).

The richness of a medium is dependent on its ability to provide information in ways that minimize vagueness, according to Daft and Lengel's (1986). According to their theory, the richness of a medium used to communicate varies depending on the situation. In order to construct media hierarchy in an organizational environment, Daft, Lengel, and Trevino (1987) used four criteria: feedback capability, communicational channel type (such as body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice), personal quality of the source, and information process. They claimed that social cues are missing from communication modalities that do not incorporate nonverbal indicators, such as telephone or face-to-face encounters, which are poor in richness. As such, for them, email communication is considered a poor communication channel. This view has been challenged by AlAfnan (2015a) who showed that email communication can also be used as a synchronous communication channel as communicators, if there is a need, communicate ideas in threads/chains of emails.

Research has shown that email and CMC are effective forms of communication, although Olaniran (2002) contends that the absence of social cues in emails might lead to misunderstanding and misinterpretation. According to his theory, "the bulk of misconceptions in CMC are related with message problems rather than cultural or linguistic difficulty" (p. 208). This supports the argument that communicators must comprehend the hybrid nature of CMC and emails and be conscious of the implications when sending or answering emails. The focus of this paper is on requests and strategic techniques used in emails between students and teachers.

Brown and Levinson (1987) developed their politeness theory in response to Goffman's (1967) work on the face. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), speakers are motivated by the need to win others' approval (what they named "positive face") while also maintaining their independence (which they called negative face). Another alternative for communicators is the bald-on-record tactic. Communicators can deploy imperative, declarative, or interrogative words to create a bald on-record action. The bald-on-record politeness method is regarded as a straightforward politeness strategy in this study. Indirect politeness strategies include both the use of positive and negative politeness techniques.

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), the use of indirect tactics is primarily split into positive and negative politeness strategies. Redress tailored to the addressee's "positive face, his perennial desire that his demands (...) should be regarded of as desirable" is what is referred to as positive politeness (Brown and Levinson.1987, p.101). According to Brown and Levinson, close friends frequently use positive politeness. However, negative politeness techniques are "redressive behavior geared to the addressee's negative face: his wants to have his freedom of action and attention unrestrained." It is at the core of respectable conduct (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 129).

Emails are examined using Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory (AlAfnan, 2014, 2017, 2021, 2022a, 2023). Requesting was discovered to be a fairly prevalent feature in business email (Gains, 1999; Ziv, 1996). When Nickerson (1999) looked at 200 emails from a Dutch-British company, she discovered that information exchange was the most frequent activity and requesting was the most frequent function. Cheng and Hsu (1998) discovered that Chinese learners of English and American native speakers of English who used email to make requests positioned their requests at the end of the messages to give the recipient and themselves time to prepare for it by providing information sequencing. In the setting of emails between students and teachers at one university in Malaysia and one institution in the

Philippines, this study investigates politeness tactics utilized in the email subgenre of requesting (AlAfnan, 2015a) based on the used speech actions (AlAfnan, 2022b).

3. Methodology

This study examines politeness strategies used in the email subgenre of requesting (AlAfnan, 2015b) in student-teacher emails in one Malaysian and one Filipino university. For the sake of this study, a corpus of 40 email messages was collected from student-instructor email interactions. The emails were randomly selected from the email inboxes of 2 faculty members. The selection criterion was based on the main purpose of this study which is the examination of politeness strategies used in requesting emails.

After deciding on the corpus of emails, consent emails were sent to the students informing them that the emails will be analyzed for the sake of research purposes only and that the emails will be examined to identify the politeness strategies used in requests. The students replied to the consent emails confirming their willingness to allow using the emails as part of the study. After receiving the approval, the data analysis process started.

In light of the politeness theory proposed by Brown and Levinson in 1987, the politeness methods utilized in the emails are examined. Initially, the techniques were divided into direct and indirect politeness techniques. The bald-on-record politeness method is one of the direct politeness strategies. The requests that were made in the imperative and interrogative forms fell within this category. It was observed that many requests made in the imperative forms were followed by a politeness-improving phrase like "please," "kindly," or "please kindly." These mitigation measures indeed lessen the level of imposition, but because the level of imposition is still quite high, they were nevertheless classified as direct on-record requests (AlAfnan, 2016).

Indirect politeness/requests were divided into positive and negative categories. Positive politeness, according to Brown and Levinson (1987), is demonstrated when the speaker reduces the imposition on the hearer's positive face. The hearer would feel good about the request if this was done. The speaker avoids imposition on the listener by being indirect and apologetic, which carries a negative sense of politeness. Both tactics were classified as indirect politeness strategies in this study because they are designed to avoid placing direct demands on the hearer.

This study makes use of the mixed research method. The quantitative research methods provide insights into the number and the percentage of occurrences, which would provide numerical and statistical values that would help in comparing and contrasting the use of politeness strategies in the two universities. The qualitative research methods would provide perspective to these numbers and statistics to provide an in-depth explanation of the use of politeness strategies and the purpose of using these strategies in the given contexts.

4. Data Analysis

Using Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, 45 politeness moves were identified in the content of the corpus of Malaysian student-teacher emails (20 emails) with an overall frequency of 2.25 moves per email message. Examining these moves shows that they are either directly on record (31.1%) or indirect (68.9) using positive or negative politeness. To present a fuller view of the use of these politeness strategies, they are discussed separately below.

Table 1. Politeness Strategies used in Malaysian students' emails

Politeness Strategy	Number	Percentage
Direct politeness	**14**	**31.1%**
Imperative	11	24.4%
Interrogative	3	6.7%
Indirect politeness	**31**	**68.9%**
Positive Politeness	14	31.1%
Negative Politeness	17	37.8%
Total	**45**	**100%**

As Table 1 shows, indirect politeness strategies are categorized as 17 (37.8%) negative politeness moves and 14 (31.1%) positive politeness moves. Direct politeness was used 14 times (31.1%). Direct politeness is categorized as 11 (24.4%) imperative politeness moves and 3 (6.7%) interrogative politeness moves. This shows that, in general, Malaysian students preferred using the indirect approach when communicating with their lecturers.

Table 2. Politeness strategies used in Filipino students' emails

Politeness Strategies	Number	Percentage
Direct politeness	**18**	**18.18%**
Imperative	1	1.01%
Interrogative	3	3.03%
Unhedged Performatives	4	4.04%
Hedged Performatives	10	10.10%
Indirect Politeness	**81**	**81.82%**
Positive politeness	36	36.37%
Negative politeness	45	45.45%
Total	**99**	**100%**

As Table 2 shows, 99 strategies were found in the corpus of the Filipino students' emails with both direct (bald on-record) and indirect (with redress) strategies used at varying degrees. This further indicates an average of 4.95 strategies per email. Table 2 presents these strategies broken down into sub-strategies.

Direct Politeness Strategy (Bald on record)

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), the main reason for using the bald on-record strategy is "whenever S wants to do the FTA with maximum efficiency more than he wants to satisfy H's face, even to any degree, he will choose the bald on-record strategy" (p. 95). As such, by using the bald on-record strategy, the writer pays no attention to either the positive or the negative face of the recipient, which could be viewed as a direct and sometimes impolite strategy. However, the usage of this strategy does not always mean that the writer pays no attention to the receiver's face or that speaker's (writer's) desire to satisfy the hearer's (recipient's) face is small. In task-oriented communication, according to Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 97), the focus might be on the task, and "face redress may be felt to be irrelevant".

Analyzing how Malaysian students used the bald on-record politeness tactic in their emails reveals that the goal of the 14 (31 percent) imperative and interrogative bald on-record requests is to demand an action or solicit assistance. In the corpus, the plain on-record imperative form occurred 11 times, or 24.4 percent of all the politeness strategies. In fact, imperative phrases can have one of two alternative forms: they might start directly with a verb, as in "open the submission link," or they may begin with a politeness marker as "please," "kindly," or "please kindly," preceded by the verb, as in "please revert." Only once, as previously noted (click the submission link), was the imperative deployed without a mitigation strategy, which indicates plain imposition. As you can see in example 1, the remainder of the imperative demands were made in a polite manner by utilizing the words "please" or "kindly."

Ex 1: Kindly respond to this email asap.

As in example 1, the student requested his instructor to respond to the email the soonest as possible. Even though the usage of imperative seems direct on record, the usage of 'kindly' reflects a relatively polite method to request the action (AlAfnan, 2015a), the usage of 'ASAP' increases the level of imposition by adding time restriction.

The least common politeness technique in the corpus is the use of the interrogative question on-record. It transpired three times, making up 6.6 percent of all politeness methods used in emails and 2.1 percent of bald on-record politeness techniques. The students created their requests using three distinct types of interrogative sentences: "yes/no inquiries," "Wh-questions," and "any news on." The imperative on-record technique is typically assessed as being less direct than the interrogative on-record strategy; yet, the actual usage of these two on-record politeness strategies in the emails demonstrates that the imperative usage is less direct than the interrogative usage. The following lists the three examples.

Ex 2: Can you open the submission link for me?

Ex 3: When did you upload the assignment document?

Ex 4: Any news on changing the grade?

In example 2, the student missed the submission deadline and asked his faculty to open the submission link. The student knows that there is no late submission policy for the assignment. Another student, in example 3, asked the faculty to inform him when was the assignment document uploaded. Yes/no questions provide two possibilities, but Wh-questions specify the type of information required, providing a larger range of options, according to Schiffrin (1987). The "yes/no question" in example 2 appears to be an extended question in practice, nevertheless. In other words, if the response was yes, the email's sender anticipated that the recipient would create the submission link. The same is true for example 4. Even if the response to the question could be "no," the author of the question is looking for "news," not just a simple "yes." However, it is evident from example 3 that the writer wants to know the day and time that the assignment paper was uploaded.

In the emails that were written by the Filipino students, four bald on-record sub-strategies are found in the corpus, used to request action, consideration, and help from the teacher. In the case of request, the imperative is considered to be of the highest degree of directness as it somehow directs the hearer to perform something as seen in the following example.

Ex. 5: …please accept my paper.

Despite the threatening nature of imperatives, example 5 is expressed together with a politeness marker 'please'. As an effect, although the statement is a directive to the hearer to consider the late submission of the requirement, such imposition is softened and becomes a polite directive.

The use of interrogative is seen 3 times in the data comprising 3.03% of the total strategies. In all instances, only one type of question was used to express the request, Yes-No question. The following examples present all instances of interrogative in the data.

Ex. 6: … can I still answer the assessment?

Ex. 7: Can you extend it for a few hours…?

Ex. 8: Can I still pass it?

Hassanova and Rzayev (2013) indicate that Yes/No questions used as request "induces the respondent to act" (p. 1042) rather than simply give a response. This is particularly seen in Example 7 in which the student does not want a simple yes or no answer from the teacher, but the

action of extending the deadline of the online assessment. The same idea can be said about Examples 6 and 8; however, these imply a hypothetical action of allowing the students to answer the assessment and submit the requirement. Hassanova and Rzayev add that interrogative places the address at an advantage because the sender recognizes his/her power or control over the situation, and that the student is dependent on the teacher's authority.

Aside from imperative and interrogative strategies, performatives were also found in the corpus of the study. Blum-Kulka and Olshtein (1984) further categorized this as either unhedged or hedged performatives comprising 4.04% and 10.10% of the total strategies, respectively. The key difference between the two is the use of a word or phrase that mitigates the imposition of the performative which is absent in unhedged and present in hedging.

Ex. 9: I kindly ask to re-open the summative assessment…

Ex. 10: I just want to ask for consideration for the Akutagawa's Truth quiz.

Both examples use the performative "ask"; however, in Example 5, there is a direct action of asking and the politeness marker "kindly" does not seem to change this fact as it simply mitigates the word "ask". On the other hand, the performative "ask" is hedged by the phrase "I just want to ask" making the action of asking less direct. Based on the data, although the student used direct request strategies, the majority of these were realized by hedged performative (10.10%), which is considered to have the least degree of directness compared to the others.

Indirect Politeness Strategies

The indirect politeness strategies were the most frequently used strategies in the emails with an overall frequency of 69 percent. Examining the two indirect politeness strategies, positive and negative strategies, in the emails shows that the 14 (45.2%) positive and 17 (54.8%) negative politeness strategies. For a clearer presentation of the two indirect strategies, they are presented separately.

The use of positive politeness strategies is not essentially redressive or related to face-threatening acts; they are also widely used to maintain a friendly environment and build a cooperative atmosphere (Pilegaard, 1997). In fact, the positive politeness strategies in the emails were mainly used by students to 'be optimistic' in their approach. Examples 5 and 6 provide insights into the usage of positive politeness strategies in Malaysian students' emails.

Ex 11: I look forward to hearing from you shortly.

Ex 12: I hope that ABE will assist me in this matter.

In example 11, the student sent his instructor an email requesting input on a problem. The student makes the supposition that the receiver will reply to the email "shortly" in order to encourage a quicker response. In example 12, the student explained a problem with a grade and attempted to prompt a prompt response by "hoping" (requesting) assistance. The same method was utilized in this instance.

Ex 13: This is Wxxx Yxxx, your student, I need to see you Sir to talk about something.

Ex 14: I want to have an appointment with Sir.

A closer look at how the negative politeness methods are really used reveals that some are used more frequently than others. For instance, the "provide deference" method was employed in 11 emails. The provide deference method, according to Brown and Levinson (1987), is deployed in one of two realizations: lowering oneself or elevating another. The most common way to show respect was to use the prefix "sir" instead of a traditional greeting or salutation. As demonstrated by example 13, the student referred to the lecturer as "Sir" in the middle of the request. Nevertheless, if using "you" was inevitable, they followed it with "sir," as in example 13. Some students employed a self-deprecating tactic in the email's pre-closing move in addition to elevating the receiver. However, example 13's use of "your student" does not display deference because it is used to identify the self rather than to humble the self. The combination of the positive and negative politeness techniques in a single sentence in example 13 is another intriguing feature. In the midst of the positive politeness strategy of "be hopeful," the student employed the "give deference" negative politeness technique. In other words, the student used the "be hopeful" positive politeness technique to express his desire and then expected the lecturer to kindly grant his wish by employing the "give deference" negative politeness method. The request, which is a face-threatening behavior, is meant to be more respectful and less intimidating by combining the positive and negative politeness tactics. This also applies to example 14, in which the student wished to use the title "Sir" when requesting an appointment in order to be respectful and humble.

There is a preference among Filipino students for the use of indirect politeness (redressive) strategies as it makes up 81.82% of the total strategies found in their email. Doing redressive actions does not simply mitigate the degree of imposition, but attempts to "counteract the potential face damage of the FTA" (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 317) as it implies the unintentionality of such face threat. The two redressive actions, positive and negative, are found in the student email comprising 36.36% and 45.45%, respectively. These are discussed separately as follows.

Whenever someone uses positive politeness, the speaker somehow appeals to solidarity with the hearer. This is because it implies that the speaker has the same wants as the hearer. Positive politeness strategies were used 36 times or 36.37% by the students in their emails. Among these strategies, the students mostly gave or offered a reason for the request, which was used 14 times in the data, followed by expression of goodwill used 12 times, while expression of optimism was used 8 times. These are presented in Examples 7 to 9.

Ex. 15: …we would like to ask for the rubrics of the short story essay *since it's not attached in the assessment.*

Ex. 16: Thank you very much and have a great day ahead!

Ex. 18: I hope to get positive feedback from you…

In Example 15, the student provided a reason for the preceding request to somehow justify it to the teacher and is an example of positive politeness. Meanwhile, Examples 16 and 17 are commonly seen at the end or complimentary close of the email usually expressed one after the other. Both of these establish solidarity with the receiver as the student expresses the hope for something positive for (a great day) and from (positive feedback) the teacher.

Compared to positive politeness, negative politeness strategies were used at a higher frequency. This strategy established distance between the speaker and the hearer as an acknowledgment of individuality and freedom. This is commonly seen in communication between people of unequal power to not appear as too imposing, especially towards the person of authority. Examples 10 to 11 present excerpts of the emails containing a negative politeness strategy.

Ex. 19: It was my fault, Ma'am.

Ex. 20: I'm hoping for your kind consideration, Ma'am.

Three negative politeness strategies were prominent in the data with giving deference being the most frequently used 36 times. The very common usage of this is found at the beginning of the email when addressing the teacher as "ma'am", "miss", and sometimes together with the first or last name, which is a means of recognizing the teacher's authority. However, giving deference could also be found at a sentential level as seen in Example 19 when the student admits the fault of missing the assessment. In this case, the student lowers him/herself even more as it suggests one's negligence. In Example 20, however, the student combined positive and negative politeness strategies in one sentence, specifically, being optimistic and giving deference, respectively as he/she hopes for consideration from the teacher and addresses as her ma'am to acknowledge her authority.

5. Discussion

Malaysian and Filipino students used both direct and indirect strategies in their email requests to their teachers. At the same time, redressive strategies of positive and negative politeness were found in their requests. These, however, were utilized by each group in varying degrees.

Moros and Rahim (2013) claim a change in the discourse pattern in the Malay culture as they found consistent use of direct strategies in the requests across situations regardless of power relations and social distance; however, the present study suggests otherwise. Malaysian students may be described as indirect in their requests with redressive strategies making up more than half of their total strategies and their bald-on strategies are even accompanied by mitigators. These results are in consonance with past studies establishing Malaysians as being indirect, especially in their requests. For instance, Khalib and Tayeh (2014) found Malaysian students to be conventionally indirect regardless of power and distance. Indirect strategies are also prominent among Malaysian's requests when compared to Saudis' (Alakrush and Bustan, 2020). Furthermore, such a strategy is said to be influenced by their L1 as they tend to use direct translations of expressions in their first language. De Vito (2008 in Hei, David and Kia, 2013) said that Malaysian culture is highly tolerant of ambiguity. This could then be realized in the indirectness of their speech acts. In the present study, imperatives, considered bald on-record, are accompanied by polite expressions "kindly" and "please", which lessens the request imposition.

On the other hand, the study of Paramasivam and Subramaniam (2018) presents that superiors are influenced by the degree of imposition of their directives toward their subordinates. The study shows that greater imposition leads the supervisors to be more authoritative while lesser imposition makes them take the egalitarian stance. Aside from imposition, Alafnan (2014) also indicates that social distance also influences Malaysians' requests. These imply the tendency among Malaysians to be direct depending on the context or situation in which the request must be realized. Moreover, the study found that Malaysians use a variety of strategies, combining direct bald on-record and politeness strategies which allows them to be efficient, friendly, and mindful of their and their interlocutor's face. The present study also yielded similar results as Malaysian students used combinations of direct and indirect strategies in their requests to their teacher.

Finding on Filipino students' requests are comparable to previous studies describing them as less confrontational and less imposing, especially in threatening acts such as requests. In the students' bald on-record strategies, the least direct, hedged performatives, are the most used while imperative the least. Onchaiya (2021) found similar results when comparing Filipino teachers with Thai teachers as hedged performatives are more associated with Filipinos and lesser imperatives are used compared to Thai speakers of English. In addition, Agnir-Paraan (2017) also found discourse makers "please" and "kindly" mitigating the bald on-record strategies of superiors in their memoranda. The same is also found in the present data, which, according to Agnir-Paraan is a means to delay the impact of the imposition.

The use of negative politeness strategies in the data is also prominent; however, the students also used positive politeness to establish solidarity with the teacher with their offering of explanation and expression of goodwill. Selgas (2022) also found the prominence of positive politeness strategies among Filipino students as they respond to their teacher's online announcement, which aimed at making their teacher feel good and respected. Filipinos' appeal to solidarity could not only be seen in student-teacher exchanges, but also in highly threatening communication. Correo (2014) found that Bikolanos, an ethnic group in the northern region (Luzon), employed positive politeness in a politically charged discourse (online forum). This supports the initial claim of Agnir-Paraan about Filipinos being unimposing of their interlocutors; hence, non-confrontational.

On the other hand, in student-initiated email communication, negative politeness is the most used strategy among Filipino students' requests

to their teacher in the study of Taglucop (2022). Because of the positive social distance between the students and their teacher, negative politeness exhibits the students' respect toward a person of authority. The study also established the power-effort relation; because the students have lesser power, they exert more effort in making requests. This could also be the same reason for the prominence of negative politeness strategies in the present study add in the fact that they are the ones in need of a favor from the teacher; hence, the strategy would allow them to realize the request without imposing too much and impeding their teacher's freedom.

As both groups of students accessed similar strategies in realizing the speech act of request toward their teachers, one could think more of similarities than differences between the two. However, some aspects of these strategies could also be associated with one group and the other. For instance, Filipinos realize their requests longer with more strategies than the Malaysians; they produced more than twice what their counterpart did. This implies that Filipinos tend to give more reasons and employ other strategies to justify their requests and appeal to their teacher. In addition, each group seems to be on both ends of the continuum of the directness of their bald on-record strategies. On one hand, Malaysian students prefer the most direct strategy, imperatives. On the other hand, Filipinos mostly used the hedged performatives, considered to be the least direct. The latter's use of such strategy could be attributed to pragmatic transfer since expressions in Filipino such as *Tanong ko lang kung puedeng kumuha…* (I just want to ask if I could get…) is considered more polite than its direct equivalent *Puedeng kumuha…?* (Can I get…?). This, together with the percentage of redressive strategies used, makes Filipino students less direct than the Malaysian students in this study.

It must be noted, however, that the study has not looked into the social distance between the teachers and their students, which could have also influenced their choices of strategies.

7. Conclusion

Although the findings of this study support the universality of request and politeness strategies, differences between the two groups of students are also proof of the cultural specificity of certain strategies. Huang (2007) discusses how some speech acts are carried out differently in some cultures. This means that a speech act could be realized in varying ways depending on the discourse community. Therefore, the way Malaysian and Filipino students carried out their requests are reflections of their individual cultures. The researchers then recommend the incorporation of cross-cultural pragmatic awareness in language classrooms to encourage students to be more culturally adaptable as they engage in communication with people from different nationalities.

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